1: Tew E-4 (no date) 1950 FT7 Yao FT7

I. REGION OF MOZAMBIQUE

YAO, MAKUA-LOMWE, MAKONDE

In the region between Lake Nyasa and the east coast of Africa, between the Lukuledi river in the north and the Zambezi in the south, there is a congeries of peoples whose culture is very similar over the whole area. They are the *Makonde* group, the *Yao* and the *Makua-Lomwe* peoples. Of these only the Yao has been studied in detail. The scanty information about the other inhabitants of the region will be summarized after the fuller summary of the Yao material, so that points of similarity and difference may appear more clearly. Fortunately for this procedure the Yao occupy a central position, from which they may be taken to represent in many ways the culture of the neighbouring peoples.

The *Makonde* inhabit the Makondi plateau between the Lukuledi and Ruvuma rivers (39° and 41° longitude). Closely related to them are the *Mavia*, on the plateau of that name, south of the Ruvuma; the *Mwera*, north of the Lukuledi river, on the Rondo plateau; and the *Matambwe*, in the Ruvuma valley. It is possible that the *Ngindo*, *Ndonde*, and *Ndendeule* should also be included. This group seems to be culturally and linguistically distinct in several points from the Makua and Lomwe, and the Yao, although they have in common the main features of political and social organization.

The region of the *Yao* is between the Ruvuma, Lujenda, and Luchilingo rivers. They also extend into Nyasaland and Tanganyika Territory.

The *Makua* occupy the area between the Lujenda and Lurio rivers and the coastal strip from the mouth of the Lurio nearly to Quilimano.

The *Lomwe* are sometimes regarded as a sub-branch of the Makua, but probably have as much right to be called a separate tribe as the Yao. They are bordered by the Makua on the north, east, and south, and by Maravi on the west. South of them, around Quilimano and east of the Mlanje mountains, are the *Cuabo*,[1] related to the Makua and Lomwe, and also the Podzo, on the south bank of the Zambezi delta.

The region is forested lightly or heavily, and varies in character according to the elevation, soil, and humidity. The coastal belt from Mozambique northwards has thorn-bush vegetation, thick in parts, giving way to light forest and grassland farther inland. In the uplands there is good forest, broad-leaved and evergreen, and deciduous trees near the lake district. Throughout the territory there are narrow strips of richer vegetation along the watercourses, and along the coast mangrove swamps occur at intervals. In the highlands the mornings and evenings are cool and pleasant for eight months of the year, and it is even cold at night in May and August, temperatures of 50° and 60° F. being common in the day. In the hot season the heat is severe, especially in the valley of the Ruvuma. The mean annual rainfall for Mozambique is 39·50 in. and for Likoma on the lake, 39·9 in.[2]

The people are primarily cultivators, but the Yao keep cattle in the highlands. Both Yao and Makua traded with the Arabs and were energetic slave-raiders. The coast Makua and most of the Yao are Islamized.

[1] *c-* pronounced as *ch-*.

[2] *Handbook of Portuguese East Africa*, 1920, pp. 68–77.

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All these peoples have in common the following points of social organization: matrilineal clans, matrilocal marriage, residence in small villages under independent chiefs or headmen. They have elaborate initiation schools with circumcision for boys, and initiation without an operation for girls. It is mainly by variations in the initiation rites that their cultures can be distinguished from one another. They also distinguish themselves by linguistic variations and by cicatrizations. This is the region of the *pelele*, or lip-ring, although Yao do not wear it.

THE YAO

TRIBAL AND SUB-TRIBAL GROUPINGS AND DEMOGRAPHY

NOMENCLATURE

The name of the tribe is spelt and pronounced in a variety of different ways: Yao, Ayo, Veiao, Hiao, Wahiao, Wahaiao, Wahyao, Ayawa, Myao, Achawa, Wajao, Adjao, Mujoa, Mujanos, Adsawa, Adsoa, Mudsau. Sometimes they are referred to by the name of one of the sections of the tribe or of one of the leaders: e.g. Amachinga, Amangoche, Massaninga (also spelt Amasaninga and Amazaninga), Chiwala, Katule, Kalenje, Mdeule.[1]

GROUPING

The Yao claim a hill called Yao, near Muembe, between the Rivers Lujenda and Luchilingo, as the original centre from which they dispersed. The main body of Yao is in Portuguese East Africa, and there are large settlements in Tanganyika and Nyasaland.

(*a*) *Portuguese East Africa.* The two main divisions of Yao in Portuguese East Africa are around Muembe and around Mtarika, on the Lujenda river.[2] Immediately south of the lower Ruvuma and at its mouth there are two smaller groups. The Yao occupy most of the territory between the Msinje, Luchilingo, and Ruvuma rivers in their upper courses.[3]

(*b*) *Tanganyika.* Yao entered Tanganyika Territory at two separate periods. In the 1850's they immigrated into Masasi, Chiwata, Newala, Tunduru districts and around Mikindani and Kyonga.[4] The other two groups are more recent comers: one (about 3,000), were taken as war-captives by the Ngoni in Songea district; the other (about 45,000), in the upper Lukuledi valley in Lindi district. They came in from Portuguese East Africa about 1912.[5]

(*c*) *Nyasaland.* There are four main groups of Yao:

(i) The largest group lives in the Southern Province, in upper Shire, and south Nyasa districts.

(ii) The second is near Blantyre, Chiradzulu, Zomba.

(iii) A small group is settled in a belt on the west coast of Lake Nyasa at Domira Bay.[6]

[1] Heckel, 1935, p. 7 n.; Hetherwick, 3, 1902, p. xviii; Abdullah, 1919; Burton, 1873, p. 81 n.
[2] *Handbook of Nyasa Co.*, 1898, p. 20.
[3] Johnson, W. P., 3, 1893.
[4] Weule, 1, 1909, p. 140.
[5] *Handbook of German East Africa*, pp. 56, 62.
[6] Murray, 1932, p. 246; Laws, 1934, p. 37; Hetherwick, 4, 1927, p. 185.

6: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1947) 1949 FT7 Yao FT7

impressed on people's memories and remembered by most of the people. Thus it was desirable to find a useful reference date between 1930 and 1940. It might be thought that the death of King George V would be memorable. However, though all who were old enough at the time could remember the witchfinders, only a few could remember the death of King George.

This skeleton chronology was filled in by events of more local significance. For example, Kawinga's brick house was built in 1929, the present Nyambi succeeded in 1933, &c. In addition, in particular hamlets there were men who had been in the Army, or had been to work in South Africa or Southern Rhodesia. Usually they could recall the date of going and sometimes of return, though they may have lost count of the intervening years. Such dates were often useful points. A small minority had actually recorded the dates of birth and death of children.

In addition to this, it was possible to fix the ages of the young children by reference to harvests, since the Yao reckon two years in retrospect, 'last year' meaning before the last harvest and 'the year before last' meaning the period before the harvest before last. Before the year before last, all time is merely *kala-kala*, the only indication of the period being the pitch of the voice in which it is said or the presence or absence of an exclamatory 'E!' before speaking.

Particular care was taken to secure the ages of women and the dates at which they had borne children. There was, as mentioned above, some reticence in mentioning the names of dead children, but this was usually met successfully by questioning the women's male relatives who were generally more communicative on these points. In spite of the care taken to obtain this information, it was impossible to fix the ages of six women in the sample, and they have been excluded from the major part of the analysis. In addition, there were thirty-nine men who were not available for questioning. These were all adults, the husbands of women in the hamlets. The Yao are matrilineal and matrilocal, and men tend to spend much of their time away from the hamlet of their relatives-in-law. Since they are in many ways strangers in the hamlets no information could be obtained about them.

2. The General Background to Fertility

All the hamlets visited were occupied by members of the Yao tribe. The Yao are an Islamized people who achieved the questionable distinction of being efficient slave raiders at the end of the nineteenth century. They are a matrilineal and predominantly matrilocal people living in hamlets of from about 5 to 100 huts or more.

Table I. *Age of Women at First Marriage*

Present age of women	Age of women at first marriage											Total	Median age at first Marriage
	7–10	10–14	15–17	17–19	17–20	20–24	25–7	25–29	25–30	30–34	Over 34		
Under 30	3	6	5	18	9	4	3	3	..	..	..	53	16·7
30–45	4	6	7	11	4	4	2	3	..	1	3	45	16·3
Over 45	..	2	1	5	8	3	1	2	..	1	..	23	18·6
Totals	7	14	13	34	21	11	8	8	..	2	3	121	17·0

6: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1947) 1949 FT7 Yao FT7

They are semi-subsistence cultivators who own no cattle and whose diet is therefore largely vegetarian, viz. sorghum and maize-meal with ground-nuts and beans and certain leaves together with a small quantity of cassava roots.

Marriages are contracted early in life with little difficulty and ceremony. Formerly girls were espoused as mere children, and this still happens, but whether the custom is falling away or not I could not check quantitatively because the memories of the old women who had been married as children forty or fifty years ago could not be relied upon. Table I shows the ages at first marriage for a sample of 121 married women for whom this information was available.

Where marriage takes place so early we can expect that the mean age when child-bearing commences will also be early. Table II shows the median age of mothers at the birth of their first child.

TABLE II. *Age of Mother at Birth of First child*

Present age-groups of mothers	*Age of mother at birth of first child*									*Total*	*Median age at birth of first child*
	12½–15	*15–17*	*17½–20*	*20–22½*	*22½–25*	*25–27½*	*27½–30*	*30–32½*	*Over 32½*		
Under 30	9	26	12	17	6	4	..	..	..	74	17·9
30–45	10	14	10	9	4	7	5	4	3	66	19·8
Over 45	5	7	9	9	5	6	1	3	1	46	20·6
Totals	24	47	31	35	15	17	6	7	4	186	19·3

From these two tables it is clear that nearly all women in the community are married early and that child-bearing commences very soon after marriage.

Table III shows the conjugal status of all women over the age of 15.

TABLE III. *Conjugal Status of all Women over the Age of 15*

Present age-groups	*Never married*	*Wives of*			*Divorcees*	*Widows*	*Total*
		Monogynists	*Polygynists*	*Labour migrants*			
Under 20	23	15	3	4	..	..	45
20–30	3	37	18	9	9	3	79
30–45	1	31	19	5	9	5	70
Over 45	..	14	10	1	11	16	52
Total	27	97	50	19	29	24	246

Here we see that of all women under 45 (194), 141 (73 per cent.) are married, though only 83 (43 per cent.), i.e. the wives of monogynists, have their husbands living permanently with them. Another 40 (20 per cent.) were married to men who were married to other wives, so that while their husbands were not living with them permanently they were nevertheless with them periodically. Eighteen other women (9 per cent.) were married to men who had left to work outside the area and hence were not living with their wives at all at the time of the survey. Visits by men to places of work outside the area may last 2 years or more. It should

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Identification

The Yao (Achawa, Adjao, Adsawa, Adsoa, Ajawa, Ayo, Hiao, Mudsau, Mujano, Mujoa, Myao, Veiao, Wahaiao, Wahiao, Wahyao, Waiyau, Wajao, Wayao) are a Bantu tribe, reported in 1945 to number 280,000 in Nyasaland, 80,000 in Tanganyika, and a large but unreported number in Mozambique. They fall into five divisions: Amakale, Mwembe, Masininga, Mangoche, and Machinga. Doke classes them linguistically with the Makua rather than the Makonde, Gutherie with the Makonde rather than the Makua. Mitchell says Yao differs sharply from Lomwe, and that Nyanja is closer to Yao than to Lomwe. Much of the present Yao country has been taken over from the Nyanja. The Yao are today largely Islamized in religion.

Basic Economy

Primarily agricultural, with brand-tillage. The staple crop is maize, followed by sorghum and manioc. Also grown are finger millet (presumably Eleusine coracana), sweet potatoes, peanuts, beans and other legumes, bananas, papayas, mangoes, sugarcane, and rice (a cash crop). Hunting was once important, and fishing still is, especially on Lake Nyasa. Chickens and a few goats, sheep, and ducks are kept, but almost no cattle because of the tsetse fly.

Sex Division of Labor

Men hunt, fish, clear land, and engage to a limited extent in planting, hoeing, and harvesting, but women do the bulk of the agricultural work.

Property

A man is entitled to as much land as he can bring and keep under cultivation.

Inheritance is matrilineal--by ElSiElSo. The heir typically inherits the status and widows of the deceased as well as his property.

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Social Stratification

There are modest wealth distinctions but no true social classes among freemen. Slaves are numerous, and the Yao formerly figured prominently in the slave trade. Slaves are obtained by capture, purchase, or compensation for injury, and a MoBr could formerly sell his nephews and nieces into slavery. The children of a free man by a slave woman are free.

Marriage

Neither a bride-price nor bride-service is required, although a man commonly gives his WiMo a few small presents.

Monogamy is the norm, but polygyny is permitted--exclusively in the non-sororal form. Most plural wives are slave women or inherited (from MoBr).

Family

The normal residential unit is a matrilocal extended family (mbumba) consisting of a group of sisters with their husbands and married daughters, but it is headed by their eldest Br (or his heir) who comes to live with them.

Residence

Residence is normally matrilocal, permanently as well as initially. Avunculocal residence, however, is also common; cross-cousin marriage often results in the coincidence of avunculocal with matrilocal residence, marriage with MoBrDa being expected in an eldest son; also the heir to the headship of an extended family or of a village regularly removes to the home of his predecessor (his MoBr); furthermore, a family head or headman may require one SiSo to live with him in avunculocal residence from the age of 8 or 9.

Kin Groups and Exogamy

Local agamy is the rule, since there is likely to be a marriageable cross-cousin in even the smallest hamlet.

Perhaps the rule of residence could be called "sororilocal." Viewed along the lifeline of the individual, a man's goal is to succeed to the headship of the matrilocal extended family of his sisters or to establish himself by neolocal residence as the head of a comparable group.

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Kindreds are clearly absent. Marriage is preferred with FaSiDa, allowed with MoBrDa, forbidden with either parallel cousin.

There are matri-sibs with totemic symbols. Though formerly exogamous, they are now agamous, and their members are widely dispersed. Sibs are divided into major matri-lineages, which are exogamous and are ranked according to the seniority of their founding ancestresses. These are divided into minor matri-lineages (mbumba), which are localized as extended families.

Distributional evidence suggests that the matrilocal form of the matrilineate is derived from an earlier avunculocal form by the extension of initial matrilocal residence to a permanent rule for all men except the heads of families.

Kinship Terminology

Fa--atati, wese. Mo--amao. Ch--mwana. ElBr (m.s.), Br (w.s.)--achimwene. Si (m.s.)-- alumbu. YoBr (m.s.), YoSi (w.s.)--mpangwa. ElSi (w.s.)--chemwali. Hu, Wi--asono.

FaBr--"big" or "little Fa." MoSi--"big" or "little Mo." MoBr --akwelume. FaSi--atati wakongwe ("female Fa"). SiCh (m.s.), BrCh (w.s.)--mwipwagao, chipwa. GrFa, GrMo--ambuje. GrCh--mwisukulu.

Cross-cousin--asiwani. Iroquois cousin terminology.

Settlement Pattern

The Yao live in settled communities, each a cluster of hamlets. Rectangular huts are usual today, but the earlier round type still survives in places.

Community Organization

Each hamlet is basically a matrilocal extended family, but in most cases new lineages have been introduced by the matrilocal marriages of the head's daughters. True clans are absent, not only for this reason but also because in marrying spouses are not truly integrated into the local descent group. Boys are circumcised at 8-12.

Local Government

Each hamlet has a headman, succession being from MoBr to

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E1Si E1So. Such positions are coveted and prestigeful.

State

The Yao are politically integrated into small districts under petty paramount chiefs, whose authority is based on military, economic, and religious power. The district chief is himself a local headman. He is assisted by a council of senior headmen, each apparently himself the headman of a hamlet and the chief headman of the hamlets of a community. There are no ruling dynasties or hierarchical forms of chiefship.

Warfare

Intra-tribal warfare is not common and is confined mainly to slave raiding. The Yao were shattered by Ngoni raids between 1864 and 1870. Cannibalism is inferentially absent.

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